

From: Eric L. Strobel
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/17/02 5:01pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

The proposed settlement is woefully inadequate when compared to the damage the Microsoft monopoly inflicts on this nation. Let us reduce this to a specific example of the impacts of Microsoft's stranglehold on desktop computers, impacts that have never even entered into consideration (as far as I know).

I am a physicist working at a defense contractor, and I simply don't "get" Windows. I find it almost impossibly difficult to use because it just doesn't work in a way that makes sense to me. Instead, I use Apple Macintosh computers (although this argument logically also applies to OS2, BeOS, Linux, and any OSes that might have been were it not for Microsoft's anti-competitive practices). Now, in a fully competitive environment, my chosen OS might be in a minority, but would still be considered an acceptable alternative. However, due to Microsoft's continuing history of predatory and illegal practices, they have achieved an almost total monopoly. In my case, I am SEVERELY limited as to potential employment opportunities because the Federal Gov't. and its contractors have largely standardized on Microsoft (to the exclusion of any alternatives, which in the case of the Federal Gov't I thought was illegal). This standardization was done, in large part, because "Everybody uses Windows, so if we must standardize on one OS, it should be Windows." I'm sure the problem is obvious... "Everybody uses Windows" because Microsoft's illegal practices had absorbed, crushed, or marginalized the competition.

What Microsoft has achieved vis-a-vis other OSes, it has now also achieved (though to a lesser degree) in the realm of web browsers. Netscape has all but been buried by Microsoft in terms of vigorous competition which would lead to rapid product enhancement and ultimately, to consumer benefit. This must not be allowed to stand, but yet the fundamental weakness of the proposed settlement does exactly that.

I strongly urge you to put some teeth back into the sanctions against Microsoft. Even while the process of the proposed settlement was going on, the world saw Microsoft arrogantly proposing a settlement in another set of cases which would have actually INCREASED Microsoft's monopoly! They MUST be taught a lesson! Their monopoly status means there's no competitive pressure to improve their products, resulting in untold billions of dollars of losses to the US economy due to reduced productivity. And, as you can see from my personal example, the potential is there for Microsoft's monopoly to do tremendous damage to individuals as well.

Lastly, regardless of the outcome, I also can't urge you strongly enough to open an investigation into the Federal Government's IT practices and how these have contributed to Microsoft's continued monopoly, even while DOJ was

pursuing an anti-trust case against Microsoft. Any settlement with Microsoft will ring hollow while the Federal Government continues to bolster Microsoft's monopoly status.

Thank you.

- Eric Strobel

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